

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02
CA-01 L-03 EB-08 /092 W
-----059643 270244Z /73

R 261523Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 503
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL VANCOUVER
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, BL
SUBJECT: SETTLEMENT OF LAOTIAN REFUGEES IN BOLIVIA

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6477 (NOTAL), (B) VIENTIANE 464 (NOTAL)

1. EMBOFF MET WITH IMMIGRATION SUB-SECRETARY GUIDO STRAUSS ON APRIL 24 TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS OF THE JUST CONCLUDED VISIT TO BOLIVIA OF FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT LARRY WARD AND TO ASCERTAIN THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE AMONG REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROJECT. STRAUSS SAID THAT BEFORE DEPARTING THE COUNTRY, WARD HAS SIGNED A PROJECT AGREEMENT, WHICH NOW MUST BE COUNTERSIGNED BY BOLIVIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER ADRIAZOLA IN ORDER TO BECOME OPERATIONAL. STRAUSS HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE
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FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND EXPECTS THAT ADRIAZOLA, WHO IS CURRENTLY IN WASHINGTON UNDERGOING MEDICAL TREATMENT, WILL SIGN THE AGREEMENT UPON HIS RETURN.

2. MEANWHILE, ACCORDING TO STRAUSS, WORK ON THE PROJECT IS ALREADY GOING FORWARD. TEN BOLIVIANS HAVE BEEN CONTRACTED TO PREPARE THE SETTLEMENT SITE, WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN INSPECTED

BY TWO OF THE PROSPECTIVE LAOTIAN IMMIGRANTS. AN ADVANCE PARTY OF TEN LAOTIANS IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN JULY, WITH THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF 50 FAMILIES (TOTALING ABOUT 500 PERSONS) TO FOLLOW IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER. THE SECOND GROUP OF 50 FAMILIES WILL ARRIVE AFTER THE FIRST GROUP TAKES HOLD.

3. STRAUSS SAID THAT THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD DEED TO THE LAOTIANS ABOUT 20,000 HECTARES OF LAND IN THE BENI DEPARTMENT, BUT THAT ALL OTHER SUPPORT, INCLUDING TOOLS, AGRICULTURAL UTENSILS, MACHINERY AND SEEDS, AND FOOD FOR UP TO FOUR YEARS, WOULD BE PROVIDED THROUGH FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY INTERNATIONAL. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SUCH SUPPORT WAS AVAILABLE, AND WOULD BEGIN TO FLOW AS SOON AS THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BY ADRIAZOLA.

4. STRAUSS COMMENTED THAT HE HAD INDEED BEEN APPROACHED BY A UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE (REFTEL DBL, BUT NOT SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE WARD PROJECT. THE UNHCR HAD SHOWN INTEREST IN RELOCATING REFUGEES FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD IN BOLIVIA. STRAUSS TOLD THE OFFICIAL THAT BOLIVIA WOULD BE HAPPY TO CONSIDER RESETTLEMENT PROPOSALS FROM THE UNHCR, BUT ONLY WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL SUCH PROJECTS WOULD BE FULLY FUNDED FROM OUTSIDE BOLIVIA.

5. STRAUSS ALSO REMARKED THAT BOLIVIA WAS ACTIVELY STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF RESETTLING 50 SALVADORAN FAMILIES IN COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR AND OF ACCEPTING AS MANY AS 500 FAMILIES FROM QIBIA, RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA
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THROUGH ICEM.

6. COMMENT: STRAUSS APPEARS EXTREMELY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE

PILOT PROJECT FOR LAOTIAN REFUGEES WILL BE APPROVED AND THAT THE FIRST PHASE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED ON SCHEDULE. WE WOULD CAUTION, HOWEVER, THAT IMMIGRATION ISSUES INVARIABLY STIR CONTROVERSY IN BOLIVIA, AND PREMATURE PUBLICITY COULD EASILY KILL THE HMONG PROJECT BEFORE IT GETS STARTED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAPAZ03315
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780179-0657
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780416/aaaaamrl.tel
Line Count: 105
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 73c42fa7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 6477, 78 VIENTIANE 464
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2845207
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SETTLEMENT OF LAOTIAN REFUGEES IN BOLIVIA
TAGS: SREF, BL, LA
To: STATE BANGKOK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/73c42fa7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014